

# Direct Interaction Will Define Future Healthcare Brands

By Gil Bashe

During the next 50 years, healthcare providers will face a more challenging competition that will demand perceptible marketing initiatives: health services will be increasingly evaluated and selected autonomously by well-informed, responsible patients – their prospective customers. Moreover, expectations and decisions of these customers will increasingly intertwine with the reimbursement decision-makers' final tabulation or intuitional budget – especially when the 'pay-for-quality' approach will be gaining ground worldwide. After all, social media and patients' immediate ability to connect and influence physicians, payers, and policymakers will be everyday practice.

Look up any given product today – medical devices, treatments, or health services – on the Internet and you can instantly access testimonials, conversations, and debates. Second opinions and crowd-sourcing are available at patients' fingertips, and are a trusted source of information.



***Gil Bashe**, Executive Vice President, Health Practice Director at Makovsky + Company, has devoted 30 years to helping health professionals, patients, payers, policymakers, and health-product innovators find common ground. He is coeditor of Branding Health Services: Defining Yourself in the Marketplace.*

Only the most trusted companies will have a voice in the conversation. Digital communications will not only change the way we interact, they will alter how we act on healthcare needs or wants. Going forward, memorable brands will edge out competitors by incorporating immediate gratification power (e.g., knowledge) into their designs. Whether for women at risk of breast cancer or patients with a cardiovascular disease history: the considerations will be accuracy, speed, cost, transparency, and sustainability.

In the future, customers who come in contact with data, diagnosis, and health delivery will be voicing their opinions on the brand publicly and in real-time. Interacting, listening, and responding almost immediately to these patients will be key to ensuring relevancy in their lives. These consumers will want accurate information at eye-blinking speed and will increasingly attach importance to guaranteed sustainability. Personnel desires will weave together with societal concerns.

We will find that as Generation X and Y consumers enter their senior years, healthcare providers and policymakers will be confronted by consumers who react less to flashy bells and whistles and are more interested in engaging in a two-way dialogue. For medical brand builders, the key to good performance lies in the ability to communicate immediately as much as it does in the ability to innovate consistently. It will be all about championing customer expectations – now.